

LA S'CHINTEIA



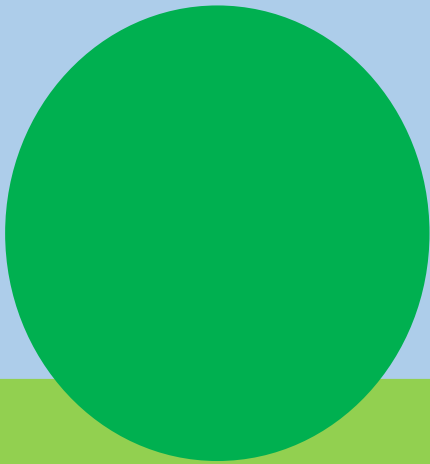
Talossa's Magazine of Everything

**La S'chinteia
Voter Guide for
54th Cosa**

**TalossAnalysis:
Wittenberg Post
Counts Part 2**

Yesterday evening, I
Observed a bush
And saw a
Really big frog

Five Years of the Three Word Story



Volume VI

November 2019



Talossa's Magazine of Everything

Ian Plätschisch, Editor in Chief

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The La S'chinteia Voter Guide

Compiled by Ian Plätschisch

The election to the 54th Cosa begins on November 15th and concludes December 1st, and up to six parties may be contesting (or perhaps more if others register between now and the start of the election). To help voters educate themselves, La S'chinteia reached out to all parties to request their platform. We present the platforms of the three parties that responded; Awakening and Magnifying Passion (AMP), The Free Democrats of Talossa (FreeDems), and The New Peculiar Way (NPW).

AWAKENING AND MAGNIFYING PASSION

THIS MANIFESTO GOES TO 11!

1. We Want You to Want to be Talossan

...and we're prepared to go left, right, up, down, and center to make that happen. Just look at the rest of our manifesto; **our ideas don't conform to a single ideology, but instead revolve around the idea that the Government is here to enrich (rather than direct) the Talossan lives of its citizens.**

Of course, the prime example of this is our desire to get bureaucracy out of our own way.

Time and time again, we have seen that the Government simply cannot take it upon itself to create more activity in Talossa by passing new laws or advertising new positions. Government initiatives to increase activity generally attract even less participation than private projects.

Instead, we advocate reforms that would make it easier for Talossans to engage in and enjoy whatever it is that they like to do ("awakening" passion) and make it more likely that such engagement will lead to even more engagement by other citizens ("magnifying" passion). In short, the Government needs to be a conductor of activity, not the battery itself (and definitely not an insulator, which all too often it is).

Talossa more than just another internet forum, and we must make that clear. In our view, if even one citizen finds purpose in a particular aspect of Talossan culture, they are helping us achieve this goal, and their activity should not be shouted down by others just because they personally don't see the point of it. Further, we recognize the Monarchy as an important source of prestige and, for lack of a better term, pizzazz which would not exist without it. Finally, remember that a nation much easier to conceptualize, and therefore "sell," than an otherwise random collection of people, and this is where peculiarism in Talossa goes awry. However, we also know the consequences of too much derivatism and traditionalism; namely, organizations structured to inhibit activity and a commitment to the Monarchy *as it is currently arranged* even when that arrangement is not delivering on the potential of a Monarchy.

As part of a recent social media campaign, the current Minister of STUFF (an AMP member) has been asking Talossans various questions about why they are Talossan. The variety in the

responses illustrates the principle that **the Government should enable citizens to experience Talossa in the way they wish, rather than dictate how Talossa should be experienced.**

2. Rookie of the Year

In just our first term as a party, we have already delivered on numerous promises

- The **Spreading the Word Act** allows citizens to opt-in to receiving emails from other Talossans about their new initiatives.
- The **Still Into This Amendment** and **The Ain't it Fun Act** ensured that, after years of trying, the Talossan people will finally get comprehensive and broadly supported Organic reform, along with the needed changes to el Lexhatx.
- The **Honours Bill** broadened the Kingdom's system of honors; adopting the best practices from other countries while enhancing the uniquely Talossan aspects.
- The **Civil Service (Commissioner Abolition) Bill** eliminated the role of Commissioner of the Civil Service, streamlining the appointment of Secretaries
- The **Slimming Down Title I Act** gave control over the day-to-day operations of the Talossan military to the people who care about it the most.
- Finally, AMP personnel have dutifully served in a variety of Cabinet and civil service posts.

We have no intention of slowing down, and we need your support to continue enacting the reforms that will generate activity and passion for Talossa.

3. We're in it to Win it

AMP is fully prepared to lead the next Government, and we hope to be given a mandate to do so. **Not only is our manifesto the most detailed of any party, and tailored to meet Talossa's modern challenges, but AMP is also filled with members with legislative and executive experience.** Finally, we are a truly national party; AMP member Breneir Itravilatx is running for Senate in Florencia, and our members and affiliates sat in all but one provincial assembly during the previous Cosa.

4. Goldilocks Bureaucracy

There has been much complaining recently about the ability of some people to effectively “veto” new initiatives simply by not engaging with them. Of course, such lack of engagement need not be intentional (there are plenty of reasons why a Talossan may need to take a leave of absence), but the fact remains that there are several areas of Talossan life that are subject to the oversight of a person or body that either is no longer interested or capable of providing that oversight or never served anything but an overly bureaucratic role in the first place.

From this description, it may appear that anarchy is the best way to operate our civil institutions. After all, if any citizen could act unilaterally, no one would ever need someone else's approval and we would all be free to use the avenues of Talossan culture how we saw fit. However, besides turning Talossa into a "bathtubbia" subject to radical reformulations on a weekly basis, this policy would have another subtle but no less important drawback. Any time a group of citizens might seek consensus to ensure a proposed change became widely accepted, there would be no indication of when, or if, that consensus was obtained. This would cause either progressively worse fracturing of our organizations, and a loss of unity and consistency in our nation, as change-makers went ahead without a way to make their new policies official, or a permanent stasis if no one was willing to move forward on anything without the express consent of all imaginable stakeholders, some of whom may not even be contactable. Unfortunately, examples of this kind of governance are not rare in Talossa.

Therefore, both too many and too few organizational procedures can be quite detrimental. Lasting organizational structures both describe exactly how business may be conducted and do not rely too much on a single person or group. Additionally, we must eliminate as many purely bureaucratic roles as possible and devolve the corresponding responsibilities and privileges to everyone involved.

For a more detailed discussion, including several examples, please see the article "Structured to Fail" from the September 2019 edition of La S'chintea.

5. Where is the King?

Talossa is a Kingdom. Even though the King does not have very much political power, he still wields a tremendous amount of ceremonial power and controls all the trappings people like to see in a Kingdom. Thus, the fact that the current King only rarely visits Wittenberg (or any other Talossan forum that we are aware of) is a big problem. **There are so many ways the King could increase the prestige and interest of many aspects of the Kingdom, and insofar as people are attracted to Talossa because of the novelty of the Monarchial ascetic, he is not.** Imagine if the King granted personal commissions to each new member of the Royal Civil Service? Imagine if he had a monthly bill-signing ceremony? Imagine if he talked directly to immigrants? Imagine if he did much of anything besides drop in occasionally to wield his political power without warning? **We cannot express enough our gratitude to the King for his exquisite leadership in the past, but if he is no longer interested in his position, he should abdicate in favor of someone who will follow through on the awesome duties of the position.**

During the previous Government, AMP took the lead in issuing several multi-partisan statements demanding the King increase his presence as a cultural figure. If he does not meet these demands, AMP is prepared to remove him from the throne. We already have developed "The We Mean Business Amendment," an easy mechanism to do just that. **To be clear, we would very much like to not have to move forward with this, but eventually we will not have a choice.**

AMP also advocates removing the hereditary aspect of the Monarchy. Passion for Talossa is not hereditary, and we cannot afford to vest one of the most important institutions of the State in someone based solely on who their parents were.

6. There are Still Too Many Ministries

Many current portfolios entail so little work they are mere sinecures, and the duties of others are mostly non-political and could be handled by a civil servant. **AMP proposes a cabinet of only four people;** a Seneschal, a Distain, a Minister of Culture, and a “Minister of State” who would combine the roles of Foreign Minister, Interior Minister, Finance Minister, and Attorney-General. **Not only would this add prestige to being in the Cabinet and ensure that only the very best are selected as Ministers, but transferring more responsibilities to civil servants would also provide more continuity between Governments.** However, we recognize that this will only work if the Royal Civil Service is also made more prestigious.

7. And Still Too Many Provinces

Activity builds on itself; so long as there is some amount of activity in a province, other citizens will be attracted to it, resulting in more activity, and so on. However, because the citizens that are active at any given time are spread between eight different provinces, it is nigh on impossible for any single province to ever reach this minimum level. **AMP proposes that Talossa reduce to four provinces; few enough give each population a jump-start but still enough to allow provinces to have unique identities and an important role in Talossan life.** Yes, all eight provinces currently have distinct histories, but that will be little consolation when their histories cease for lack of anything happening there.

Unfortunately, as we have seen from the rejection of the merger of Florencia and Fiôvâ, it will probably be difficult to get provinces to agree to merge. Even worse, unless all of the mergers happen at the same time, any provinces that merge will have their representation in the Senate reduced. To counteract this, and **to incentivize mergers, we advocate an amendment which will allow two Senators to any province born out of a provincial merger.**

8. Immigration: The First Frontier

The immigration process must convey to immigrants why they should care about Talossa beyond its novelty. While the truth is that Talossa is a community of people who are together building and carrying on the legacy of a country unique in its place in the world, it is too easy to think it is just another internet forum. This misconception is reinforced by the fact that immigration revolves around Wittenberg.

To remedy this, AMP proposed “The Talossa is Not Wittenberg Act,” which would have required an immigrant to interact with a Talossan citizen off of Wittenberg (such as on

Chatzy, Discord, Facebook, email, etc) during the previous Cosa, but it was voted down. An AMP-led Government will reintroduce this proposal.

9. Civil Service by the People

As it stands, the Government dictates what Civil Service roles are available (and the associated requirements) and then hopes (or expects) someone will fill them. This is the reverse of what should happen; **if the Government is here to serve the citizens, it should ask what the citizens would like to use the power and prestige of the Royal Civil Service to accomplish.** Sure, there are a few positions that just have to be filled and are kind of a slog no matter how you slice it, but given that all current Civil Service roles are described in the way a boring job would be described, the lack of applicants is hardly surprising. We need to spice it up by letting people do what they want instead of what the Government wants. **An AMP-led Government will actively encourage citizens, especially new immigrants, to be creative in developing roles for themselves.**

10. Another Platform Item About the Civil Service? Yep.

Current law prohibits any Secretary in the Royal Civil Service from also be a Cabinet Minister. Proponents of this requirement argue it is necessary to prevent undue concentration of power, and if there were many people seeking positions, this would be a good point. However, given relatively low activity, we believe it does more harm than good. **The purpose of the Civil Service is that it allows citizens to remain in nonpolitical posts for long periods of time, thereby reducing transition costs and allowing development of expertise. However, if a Secretary must vacate their whenever they join a Cabinet, this purpose is undermined** (especially since joining a Cabinet is a fairly common thing for an active citizen to do).

To remedy this, AMP proposed “The Bartholomew Cubbins Act” during the previous Cosa, but it was voted down. An AMP-led Government will reintroduce this proposal.

11. Happiness for Talossa!

If we are to share in this community that we and those before us have built, we must be mindful of how we communicate with each other. At the very least, if we cannot tone down our rhetoric for our own benefit, we must do it for the benefit of immigrants; **why would anyone want to immigrate to Talossa if all they see are people tearing one another apart?** Given the dearth of non-political activity in Talossa, politics is nearly the only thing prospective citizens can observe, and we are not putting our best foot forward. **This is not to say that spirited debates or harsh critiques should be frowned up, far from it, only that at the end of the day we must strike a balance and remember why we are all here in the first place** (and we can guarantee it is not to engage in endless arguments that go nowhere).

AMP members have acquitted themselves with dignity and treated all other politicians and citizens with respect for the entirety of the previous term. As leaders of the next Government, we will ensure all Cabinet members uphold this standard.

Become a member of AMP! We always need engaged citizens to hold our seats in the upcoming Cosa. There are no requirements except that you generally agree with this manifesto. Send Ian Plätschisch a PM if you are interested.

Even if you don't want to be an MC, your membership (or even just your vote) would be much appreciated.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

FREE DEMOCRATS OF TALOSSA

50 WORD STATEMENT: The Free Democrat-led government has delivered where other parties have just talked. From taking control of our national website to reviving the national language, Miestra Schiva and her Government team have gotten things done and made things fun. Re-elect us for more democratic reforms, hard-working leadership and an exciting Talossa!

PRIME MINISTRY: move more jobs from the Cabinet to non-political (Royal Civil Service) posts, to encourage people to work for Talossa without having to get involved in partisan politics.

CULTURE: Promote games, contests and puzzles for citizens. Continue re-establishment of SIGN and pushing forward to not only an agreed spelling, but long-overdue reforms to the language itself. Work with the Ladîntsch Naziunál on mandates for more use of ár glheþ.

STUFF: Establish New Wittenberg under Chancery control as soon as possible. Use social media and design website creatively to get Talossa "noticed". Collaborate with Royal Archives on Witt archiving project.

INTERIOR: Create a "New Citizens' Information Packet" and find other ways to get new citizens quickly involved in Talossan society and state. Convene the Council of Governors to recommend a future for provincial governments including suggestions for further mergers.

JUSTICE: Name several Justices of the Peace. Constitutional reform: non-hereditary monarchy; Seneschál to be named by a vote in the Cosâ; explore unicameral MMP Real Cosa (with mandatory lists). Reform of Uppermost Cort procedures. Removal of Wisconsin law and replacement with Talossan equivalents.

FINANCE: Introduce \$5 registration fee for Senäts candidates. Voluntary taxation drive.

FOREIGN AND DEFENCE POLICIES: Maintain status quo.

NEW PECULIAR WAY

BUST OUT OF BENLAND. AN NPW MANIFESTO

"Kings made tombs more splendid than the houses of the living, childless lords sat in high halls counting the long names of their ancestors more dear than the names of their sons... The line of Kings failed." --Gandalf

50 WORD STATEMENT: Derivativism has run amok and turns Talossa into a far less-fun place than it once was. The NPW provides a remedy to that with some well-placed reality. The NPW wants to clear space so everyone can let their freak flag fly.

- 1.) TOO @#\$%& MANY PROVINCES- Any is too many. The provinces are a largely dead system that don't reflect anything in particular. They should be abolished. Or, failing that, be distributed in order of seniority on a percentile system
 - 2.) NO @#\$%& LAND!- You know what claim land they don't control? Bug nations. Land claims to Milwaukee deny reality and are holding Talossa back. It is behavior that is unbecoming of the greatest experimental polity known to humanity.
 - 3.) NO @#\$%& THRONE!- Nobody has the corner on Talossanity. Down with the Monarchy.
 - 4.) FAILING THAT... @#\$%& IT AND RENAME TALOSSA BENLAND- If Talossa is so moribund and tied to its past that it can no longer move, we'll just face facts and rename the nation Benland.
-

The Previous Sentence Made No Sense

Five Years of the Three Word Story

Transcribed by Ian Plätschisch

Since November 21st, 2014, fifty-five different Talossans have contributed to the three-word story in the chatroom over the course of 270 posts. The result is truly remarkable.

Yesterday evening, I observed a bush and saw a really big frog. It hopped toward the aforementioned bush, began to talk to the pavement, began to sing, (out of tune), "Stairway to Heaven," the version with the bagpipe solo. After it ended something came out. What came out frightened everyone; the of the frog's flaming heart's jealous frog's ex-wife. (The previous sentence made no sense). Once there was overall a smell that seemed off, kinda like milk, around town. The big green frog was feeling sad about the fly it ate yesterday. Fortunately, a white unicorn decided to give the frog a magic bean to dominate the skies. The frog looks up, confused, wondering what he should do next. After another few moments, he hopped away towards his home to sleep. When he awoke he saw that the bean glowed devilishly pink! The room was illuminated yet George (the impudent motorcyclist) couldn't start the engine. "Well blast it! How am I to go to the circus now?!" Then a loud trumpeting was heard. A dozen of the strangest little creatures known to any other creature stampeded toward the terrified frog. With a

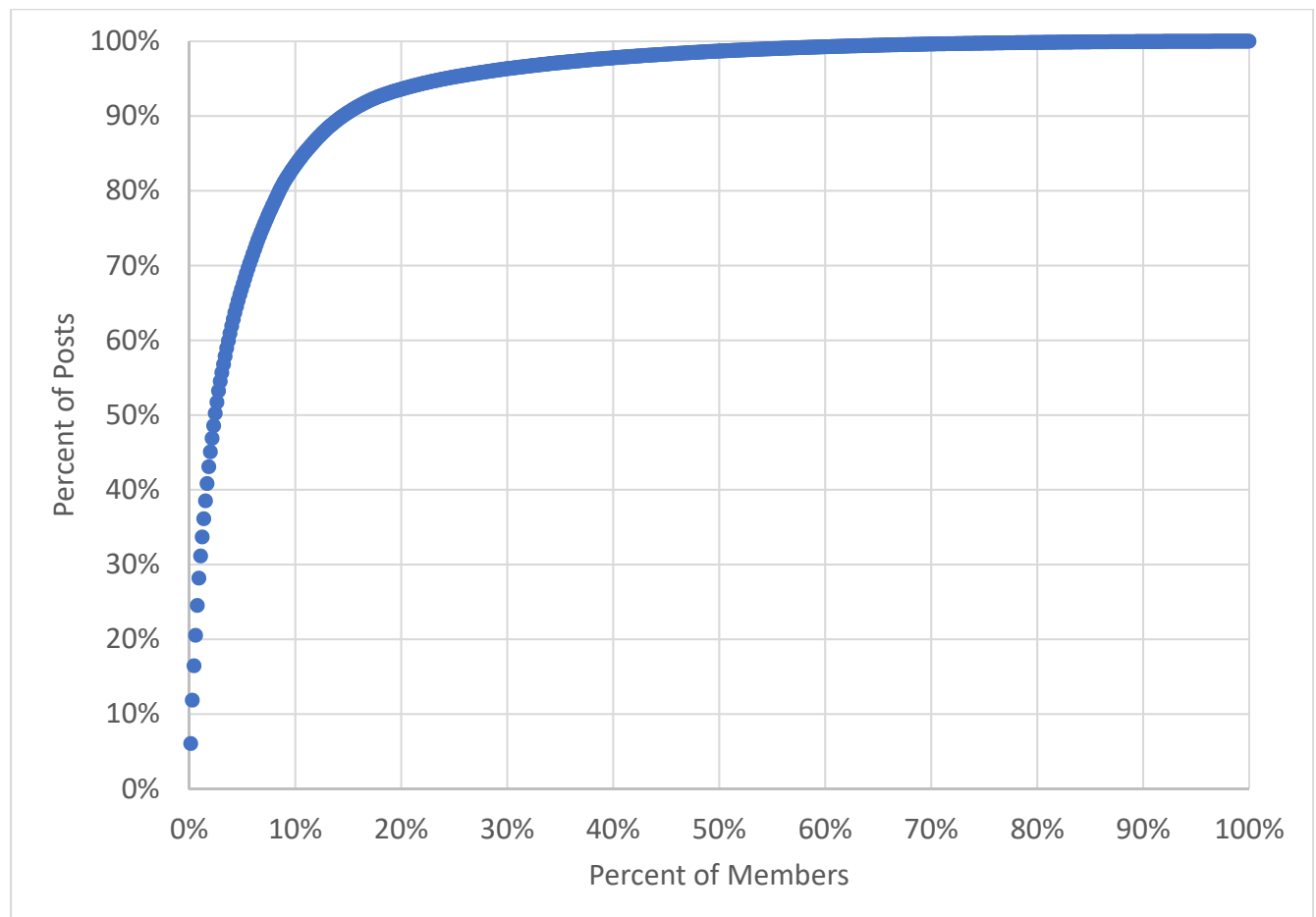
croak, the frog declared “That’s it” and set off on a frustrated adventure that was already taken by his growing sense of amusement of the futility of it. His World Domination was hindered by mounds of Christmas debris on the North Pole toy hovering off the corpse of Santa listening to Beric’ht rant about how the anthem wasn’t one blatherskite assumed that I was singing. I watched the decaying corpse potato chip award – like, unmoving. Suddenly, the frog saw his magic bean has grown into a death ray. The death ray suddenly exposed the shady shadow within the illusory Santa. I then decided to throw the full force of the death ray into hydroponic cultivation. It soon began to come alive! The now sentient magic bean ate everything it saw so it became morbidly obese. It finally understood that to become eternal it had to consume all inferior beings in the cave of holy blue cheese mountain. Cartographers discovered that it’s a landmass of monumental impropriety made out of the moon. So astronauts investigated, and they found a secret chamber in which they discovered the magic bean! Then they began to battle the voluptuous space Valkyries. The fight raged into cuddly bears. Meanwhile, in Toronto, please. Remain. Calm. The whole city had turned radioactive! Imagine Dragons had hidden their demons in the GTA, while Capt. America destroyed the world! And so it was said that superheroes were banned through the passing of known space. Meanwhile, the frog had died because had took too many allergy medicines. It made Santa cry with tears as he passed out on the frog’s split level and was reborn! I learned that in the whiskey there is too much sludge in it for it to taste good. However its smell is even worse. Later that day the evil king danced in tulips while singing a heavy metal ballad with no cowbell. What a disgraceful act of despicable musical cowardice. He certainly should be locked up in the feared guillotine with nothing except his binkie. Alas, he would then lose his head! Several years later the kingdom was different from before but everyone was secretly hiding the key to the magnificent thing called the Frog Manifesto. The legend says that the frogs will rise from the abyss of the phantasmagoric library. This library was filled with the magnificent treasure of the frog astronauts. These astronauts were surprisingly difficult to recognize, because they were mostly translucent. And I said; “What a wonderful day it is in the black girlfriend cheated boyfriend whose name is Ivan the Terrible.” The library was full of monsters and their odor. The frogs’ noses shriveled up because their olfactory genes were completely annihilated. Or maybe not. Their other senses seemed unaffected until the aliens arrived. These aliens announced that, in fact, they were humans cloned from the Mitochondrial DNA of the impudent motorcyclist! Then again it started to roar too loudly for anything in the universe to ignore but a crocodile who was seen in the vicinity of the amazing rock ate a pair of trainers, which made him start to feel a bit peaky. Suddenly, he started to chug chug and glug glug some goblin blood. It was tasty. He then got a very big giant’s club and smacked in the face a tiny fairy, who roared “I am a tiny fairy” then applied for citizenship in a devilish manner to Talossa but was rejected for various reasons including espionage and never visiting Wittenberg the best forum because I was glug glugging goblin-made orange juice although it was actually made from big rhino piss. He then proceeded to drink it and then he said “I’M NOT A G-ELF!”

TalossAnalysis: Wittenberg Post Counts Part 2

Ian Plätschisch

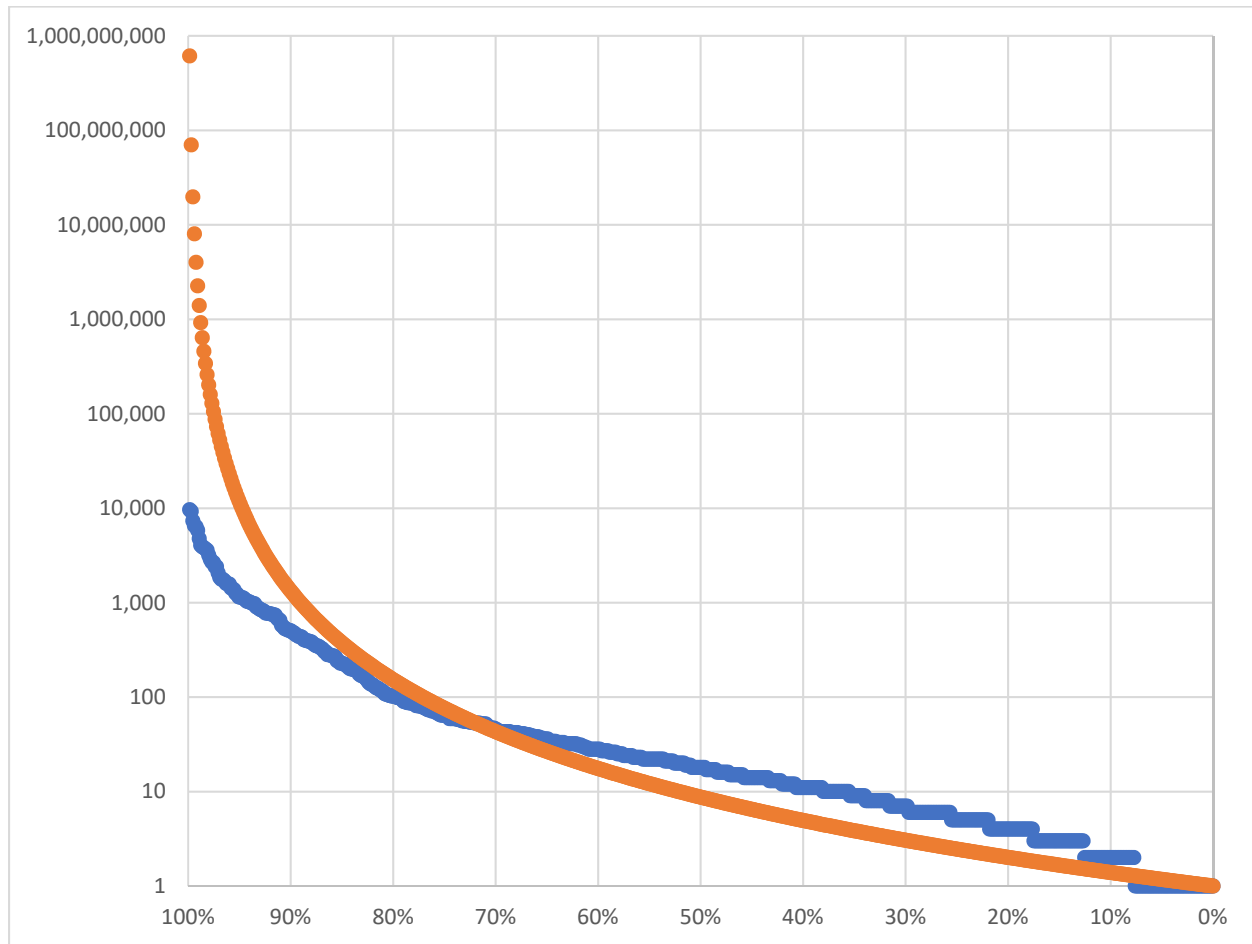
In last month's installment of TalossAnalysis, I used an exponential distribution to model the number of posts made by different members of Wittenberg (read that article if you haven't yet). This distribution did not work particularly well, and at the end of the article I speculated that the Pareto distribution might be more accurate. Similar to the exponential distribution, the Pareto distribution assumes that a small number of members make most of the posts. However, the discrepancy between the most active and less active members is usually greater in the Pareto distribution than in an exponential distribution (recall that the predictions of the previous model were too low for the most active members and too high for most other members).

We can see that there is indeed a large gap in activity between the most active and less active members. Considering the 647 members who have posted at least once, the following figure plots the percent of posts made by a certain percent of members from most to least active:



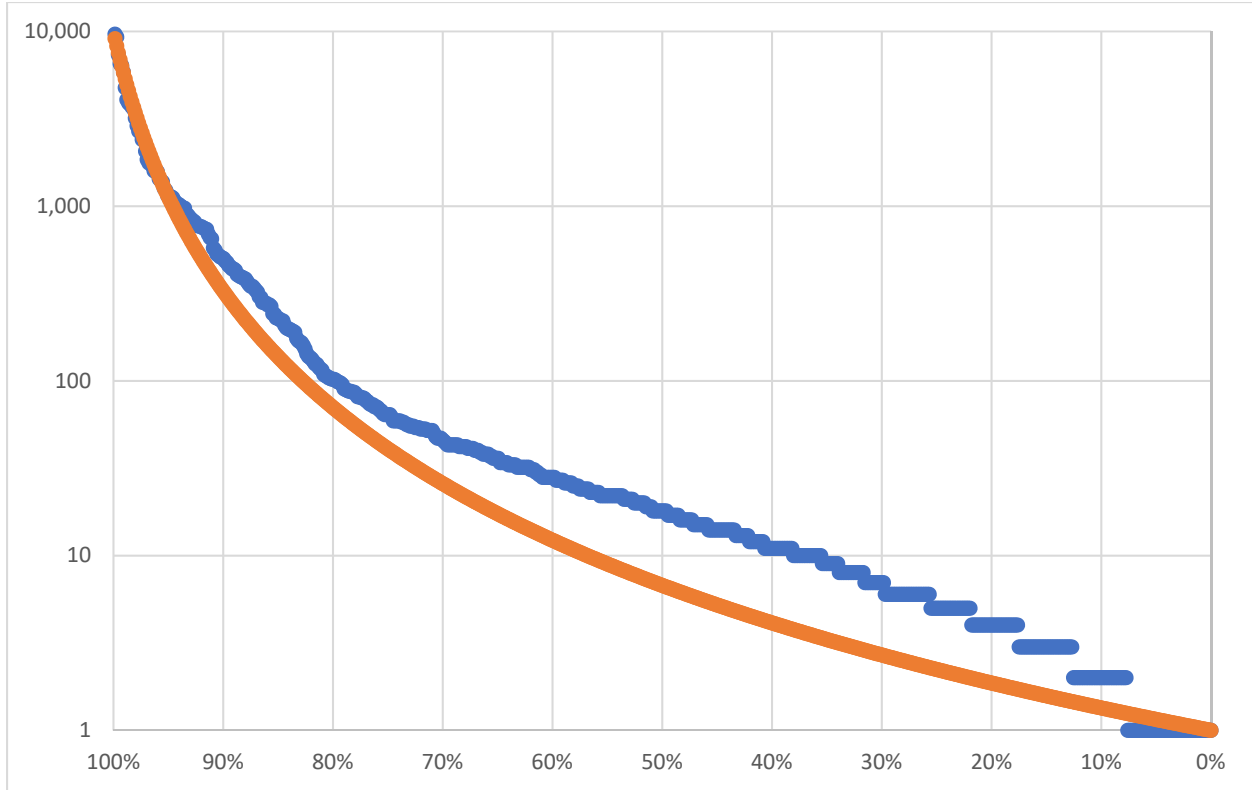
For example, more than 80% of posts have been made by the most active 10% of members, and more than 90% of posts have been made by the most active 20% of members. The single most active member has made more than 5% of all posts. This suggests that a Pareto distribution may be a good fit for this data.

However, a regular Pareto distribution severely overestimates the number of posts made by the most active 10% of members. Using this distribution to approximate the number of posts made by a member at each percentile yields:



The actual post counts are in blue and the Pareto estimates are in orange. Remember that the y-axis is on a log scale; this model estimates that the most active member of Wittenberg has made almost 1 billion posts! The model also underestimates the number of posts made by less active members. In fact, this is the opposite problem from what we had using the exponential distribution.

We can make a much better model using a bounded Pareto distribution. Unlike the standard Pareto distribution above, using a bounded Pareto distribution we can specify a maximum number of posts. Specifying a maximum of 10,000 posts yields:



This model provides very accurate predictions for the most active members, but it does underestimate the number of posts made by most other members. Nevertheless, it is the best model we have developed so far, and the first which can provide somewhat reasonable estimates for all members.

The standard Pareto distribution has the cdf:

$$F(x) = 1 - \left(\frac{x_m}{x}\right)^\alpha$$

The scale parameter x_m is the minimum value of x (in this case, one post), and α is the shape parameter. Of course, we cannot use $F(x)$ to make prediction until we know what α should be. One way to estimate α is via maximum likelihood estimates (MLE). In this technique, we determine the value of α which, were it the actual value of α , would be most likely to yield the data we observed. Using some calculus that I won't go into here, we could find that the MLE of α is:

$$\hat{\alpha} = \frac{n}{\sum \ln\left(\frac{x_i}{x_m}\right)}$$

In this expression, n is the sample size and $\sum \ln\left(\frac{x_i}{x_m}\right)$ is the sum of the natural logarithms of each observation divided by the minimum observation. Therefore:

$$\hat{\alpha} = \frac{n}{\sum \ln\left(\frac{x_i}{x_m}\right)} = \frac{647}{\sum \ln\left(\frac{x_i}{1}\right)} = \frac{647}{\sum \ln(x_i)} = \frac{647}{2,022.18} \approx .32$$

Therefore:

$$F(x) = 1 - \left(\frac{1}{x}\right)^{.32}$$

To determine which value of x corresponds to each percentile (as graphed above), solve for x in terms of $F(x)$; remember that $F(x)$ is the percentile of an observation x .

$$F(x) = 1 - \left(\frac{1}{x}\right)^{.32} \rightarrow \left(\frac{1}{x}\right)^{.32} = 1 - F(x) \rightarrow x^{.32} = \frac{1}{1 - F(x)} \rightarrow$$

$$x = \left(\frac{1}{1 - F(x)}\right)^{\frac{1}{.32}}$$

The cdf of a bounded Pareto distribution is:

$$F(x) = \frac{1 - \left(\frac{L}{x}\right)^{\alpha}}{1 - \left(\frac{L}{H}\right)^{\alpha}}$$

In this expression, L is the minimum value of x (still one) and H is the maximum value (in the above plot, this is 10,000). I could not find the MLE of α published anywhere, and while deriving it myself would probably be possible, it would be quite time-consuming. Instead, I used Excel solver to determine the value of α that resulted in the model with the least error, which turned out to be $\alpha \approx .3406$. Solving for x in terms of $F(x)$ as above yields:

$$x = \left(\frac{1}{1 - \left(F(x) * \left(1 - \left(\frac{1}{10000} \right)^{.3406} \right) \right)} \right)^{\frac{1}{.3406}}$$

End Matter

If you...

- Want to have your work published in La S'chinteia, either as a staff writer or as a one-time or occasional contributor (no experience required)
- Have feedback on one of our articles or an idea for an article
- Want to join our email list to get early access to new volumes
- Would like to get in touch with La S'chinteia for some other reason

Send Ian Plätschisch a message on Wittenberg or post in the Wittenberg thread corresponding to this volume.

Thanks for reading!